



Quarterly Progress Report April - July 2007

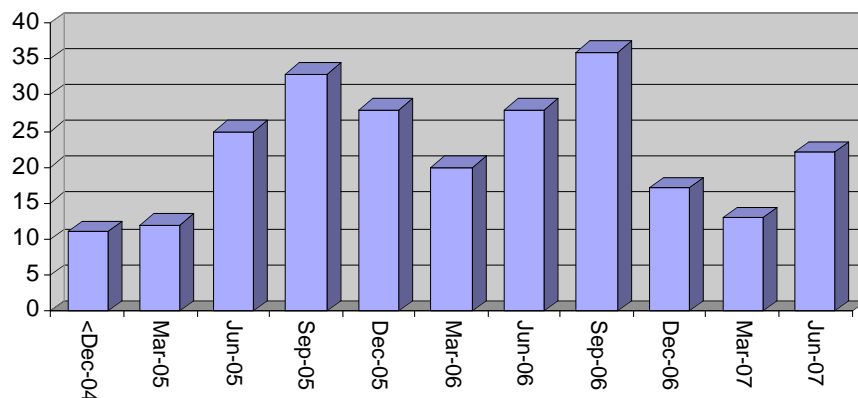
Vermont's STep Ahead Recognition System is making steady progress towards its goals. To meet the goal that STARS is an agent for improving quality, STARS must attract participants.

Overall interest in STARS since it began (the public roll-out was June 2004)

- ∞ All types of regulated programs participate (licensed and registered programs)
- ∞ Full range of point levels and star levels represented in the participants
- ∞ Over half of the nearly 1800 regulated programs in the state have received an application
- ∞ Information sessions held around the state continue to reach new participants
- ∞ Since September 2003, an average of 22 programs obtain applications each month
- ∞ Applications are obtained through the mail, downloading from website or in person

The rate of incoming applications has held steady with about 8 applications each month for the last 24 months. As seen in figure 1, there have been some periods where this average number has been exceeded. Most notably are the peaks in September 2005 and 2006. These coincide with the CDD's efforts to recruit NAEYC accredited programs and registered homes where the registrant had a Child Development Associate's credential. The rate of applications decreased in the 2006 - 2007 winter, but has regained its momentum since then.

Figure 1. Number of applications to STARS received in each quarter since September 2003



Number of participants as of July 6, 2007

- ∞ 255 programs have submitted applications to STARS
- ∞ 209 programs hold certificates in STARS (have completed application process)
- ∞ 24 programs with submitted applications are in process of completing the application
- ∞ 86 programs have been in STARS for 1 year, 96 programs have been in STARS for 2 years and are in the process of or have completed an annual renewal, 27 programs have been in STARS for more than 2 years, renewing 2 or 3 times
- ∞ 11 participating programs closed, 3 programs discontinued participation at renewal
- ∞ 8 programs submitted applications and subsequently closed or chose not to continue
- ∞ 87 of 255 programs qualify for the streamlined process (NAEYC, NAFCC, NAA or

NECPA accredited or Head Start program of quality or excellence)

The number of participating programs represents approximately 12% of the licensed and registered programs in the state. While all types of programs participate in STARS, there are proportionally more licensed programs participating than registered programs. This is typical of registered and licensed program participation in local and state initiatives.

Similar to the number of applicants, the number of new participants in STARS each quarter is relatively stable, with the exception of the most recent quarter. This is shown in figure 2. To show the overall pattern of consistent growth, figure 3 shows the total number of programs participating in each quarter.

Figure 2. Number of new participants in each quarter

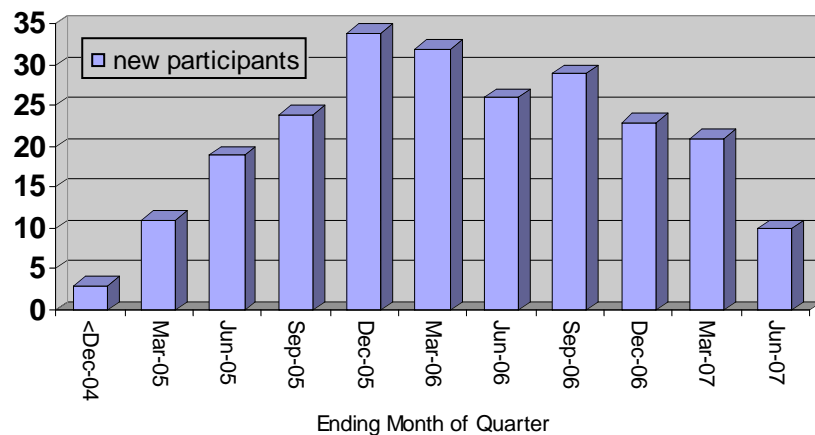
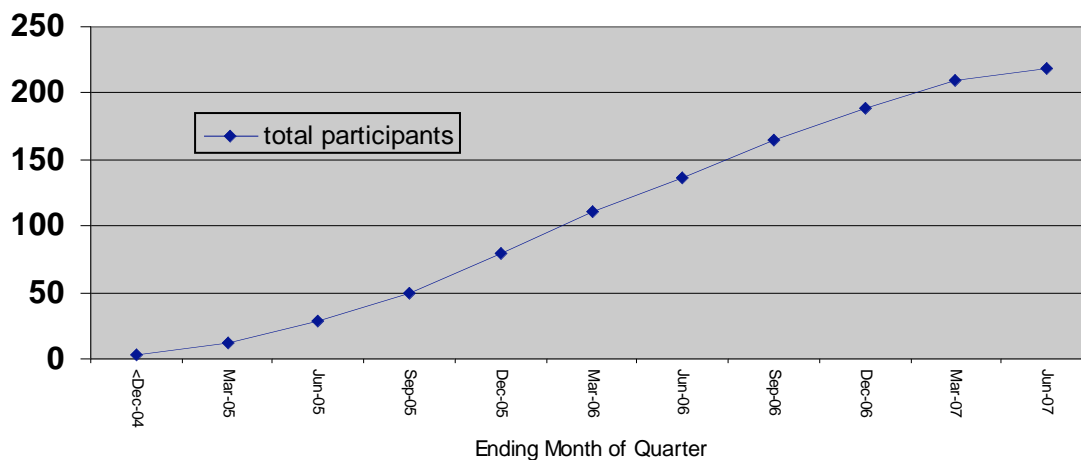


Figure 3. Total number of participants in STARS for each quarter



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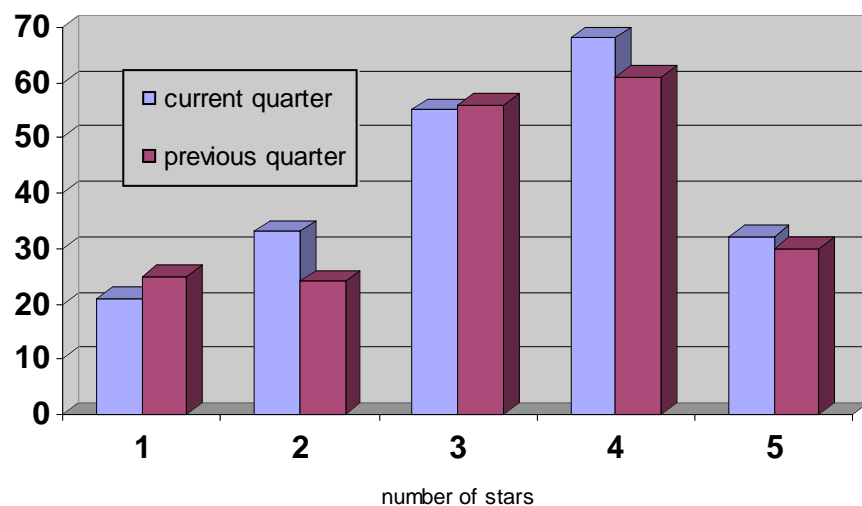
To meet the goal that STARS is an agent for improving quality, participants will represent the full range of achievements. This shows that STARS is attractive to all levels, not just those have already demonstrated quality through other standards.

Table 1. Number of stars achieved

	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	total
programs at level	21	33	55	68	32	209
percent of total	10%	16%	26%	33%	15%	

The following (Figure 4) is a graphic representation of Table 1, as well as the number of programs participating in the previous quarter (January to March) for comparison.

Figure 4. Distribution of stars among all programs, compared to previous quarter



The pattern of participants shows that 26% of the participants are at the 1- or 2-star level. STARS is attracting programs at the more basic levels, with the potential to engage them in investing in their program's growth.

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STARS participants represent all types of regulated programs in the state, including afterschool programs and public school preschool programs. STARS is showing it can promote program growth and achievement in all regulated settings.

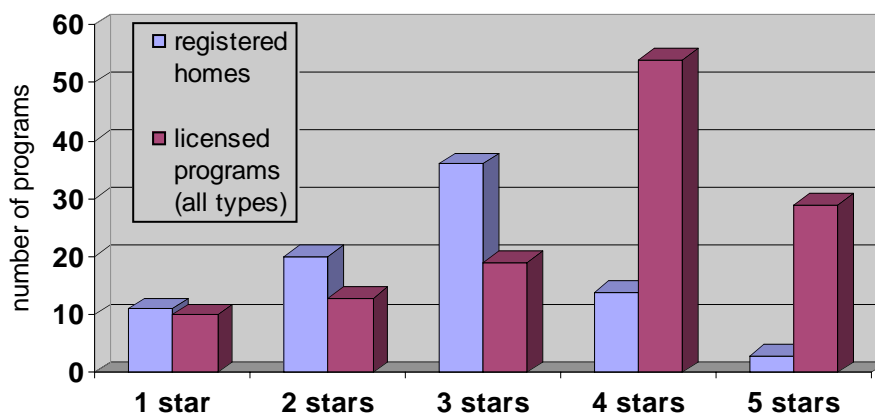
Table 2. Number of stars by type of program

	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	total
afterschool program	6	1	2	3	3	15
Head Start				5	5	10
licensed home			4	2		6
licensed center	3	12	11	38	16	80
public school preschool	1		2	6	5	14
registered home	11	20	36	14	3	84
grand total	21	33	55	68	32	209

Table 3. Number of stars by type of program, registered homes compared to licensed centers

	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	total	percent of all in state
registered homes	11	20	36	14	3	84	7%
licensed programs (all types)	10	13	19	54	29	115	17%
total	21	33	55	68	32	209	12%

Figure 5. Number of stars by registered and licensed programs



(The large number of licensed programs at the 4 and 5 star levels reflects the participation of accredited and qualifying Head Start programs)

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STARS continues to attract participants from across the state. It is the case that the number of participants per district is not uniformly proportional to the number of programs per district. A year ago, the regional participation rate varied greatly across regions, but as more programs participate, the regional differences are decreasing. However, there are still areas where the participation rate is lower than would be expected, given the size of the region. In Table 4, the last column on the right shows the percentage of total STARS participants by region. Comparing these percentages to relative magnitude of each AHS district, very general conclusions may be drawn about which areas have higher than expected participation and which areas have lower than expected participation. The table also shows how the current quarter compares to the regional participation rates of the previous quarter.

Table 4. Number of programs participating in each AHS district

	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	total	previous total	percent of total
Franklin/Grand Isle	4	5	9	7	2	27	28	* 13%
Chittenden/Burlington	2	2	5	9	16	34	31	** 16%
Hartford/ White Rvr Jct		3	7	5	1	16	16	8%
Caledonia/St.Johnsbury	7	1	6	2	4	20	18	10%
Windham/Brattleboro		2	2	3	1	8	7	4%
Washington/Montpelier		1	7	4	3	15	13	** 7%
Orleans/Newport	1	4	4	4		13	14	* 6%
Rutland	1	3	5	8		17	13	** 8%
Windsor/Springfield	2		2	5	1	10	9	5%
Bennington		7	4	13	2	26	24	* 12%
Lamoille/Morrisville	2	5	3	4		14	13	7%
Addison/Middlebury	2		1	4	2	9	10	4%
total	21	33	55	68	32	209	196	

* Indicates a region where the participation rate is somewhat higher than is expected for the relative size of that region

** Indicates a region where the participation rate is somewhat lower than expected

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Point and star level characteristics of programs that have renewed

To meet the goal that STARS is a tool programs use to implement quality improvements, STARS must demonstrate that programs increase their point levels over time.

Programs update their participation in STARS annually. Examining the point profiles for the renewing programs provides information about achievements that are indicators of quality. The results so far indicate that STARS is promoting program growth.

Application updates have been completed on 124 continuing programs (11 programs closed and 3 did not renew). As of July, 2007, 27 programs have been in STARS longer than 2 years (2nd or 3rd renewal).

For the summaries reported here, current point and star levels are compared to the programs' original point and star levels. That is, those programs renewing more than once are compared to their starting placement rather than their previous year's levels.

Table 5. Change in star level with renewal

	increased	stayed same	decreased	total
number of programs	37	84	3	124

Of the 124, 3 decreased their point levels enough that they achieved a lower star level than the previous year. These are all programs that lost points in their first renewal. Three other programs that had decreased their star levels have had an opportunity to update their information have regained or exceeded their original levels.

Eighty four programs stayed at the same star level. Of these, 47 are 4 or 5 star programs (programs that began STARS with a high level of points). The star levels of the programs that maintained the same level of stars is shown in Table 8.

Table 6. Programs staying at the same star level at renewal

	stayed at 1	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars
number of programs	9	6	22	37	10

Among the 124 programs that have been in STARS for at least one year, 15 have opted to remain at a 1 or 2 star level – 13% of the renewing participants.

Some programs changed their point profile, earning more or fewer points across the different arenas. Thirty one programs were able to use the flexibility of the point system to gain and lose points according to their accomplishments, yet still maintain the overall star level.

Table 7 shows the progression for programs that increased their star level.

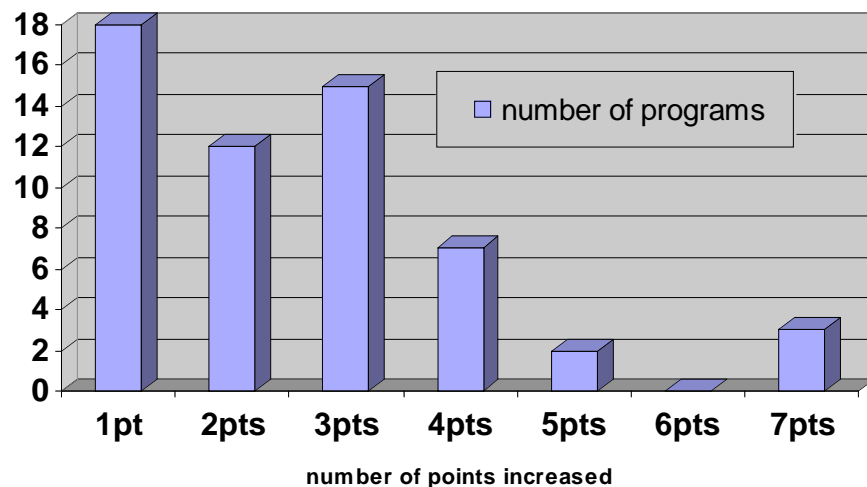
Table 7. Programs increasing their star level over original application

	increased to:	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars
started with:					
1 star		6	1	1	
2 stars			3	2	
3 stars				10	
4 stars					14
total		6	4	13	14

Of the 124, 57 (46%) programs increased their overall point level. Thirty seven programs increased their point levels enough that they achieved a higher star level than the previous year, and 20 programs increased points without increasing star level. Increases ranged from 1 to 7 points with an average increase of 2.6 points. Figure 6 depicts the magnitude of the point increases for these programs.

The large number of programs increasing point levels indicates that STARS is working as a graduated system of recognizing and encouraging program growth and accomplishments. The achievement of more points and stars is within reach of many of the participating programs.

Figure 6. Increases in the number of points programs earned



The 57 programs that increased point levels did so by increasing points across the 5 arenas, with 38 programs increasing points in more than one arena.

Table 8 summarizes program increases in points according to STARS arena.

Table 8. Number of programs increasing points in the five arenas

	1 point increase	2 point increase	3 point increase	total number of programs
compliance history	24	2	0	26
qualifications and training	15	2	1	18
families and community	25	12	1	38
program assessment	14	3	0	17
administration	23	3	3	29

Particularly noteworthy among the renewing programs:

- ∞ The Families and Community arena has been identified by participating programs as the arena they had the most difficulty with when beginning STARS. However, this arena continues to show the highest number of programs increasing points – 38 programs increased their point level here, indicating that they are doing more to engage families and becoming more active as a professional in the community. Programs are becoming more committed to including children needing specialized services, and more committed to leadership roles. Family and professional involvement are indicators of inclusive practices as well as willingness to advocate for families and the profession. This may be an arena that challenges programs, yet programs are clearly meeting this challenge.
- ∞ The Administration arena was another arena where many programs increased points. This arena recognizes business practices for providing appropriate staff support, designing and implementing clear operating policies and practices for families and staff members, and maintaining a financially sound program. The 29 programs that increased points in this arena are increasing their support for the work force.
- ∞ The Qualifications and Training arena shows 18 programs increasing points, indicating that these programs documented higher levels of staff training over the previous year. Staff qualifications and training are consistent indicators of program quality and positive outcomes for children.

Summary of findings

STARS continues to be an agent for improving quality by engaging programs in investing in their program's growth. The number of participants has grown steadily, with no indication that this will slow down (nearly 2 years of the same application rate).

The participants continue to represent the full range of program type and regional participation. STARS attracts participants in all star levels, demonstrating wide appeal and programs' interest in receiving recognition for all achievements.

Participating programs are invested in renewing their participation. Renewing programs with room to grow consistently increase their achievements over time, even in subsequent years.